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WILLIAM D BRODBECK
Colonel, Infantry
Commanding

3D BRIGADE
1st Infantry Division

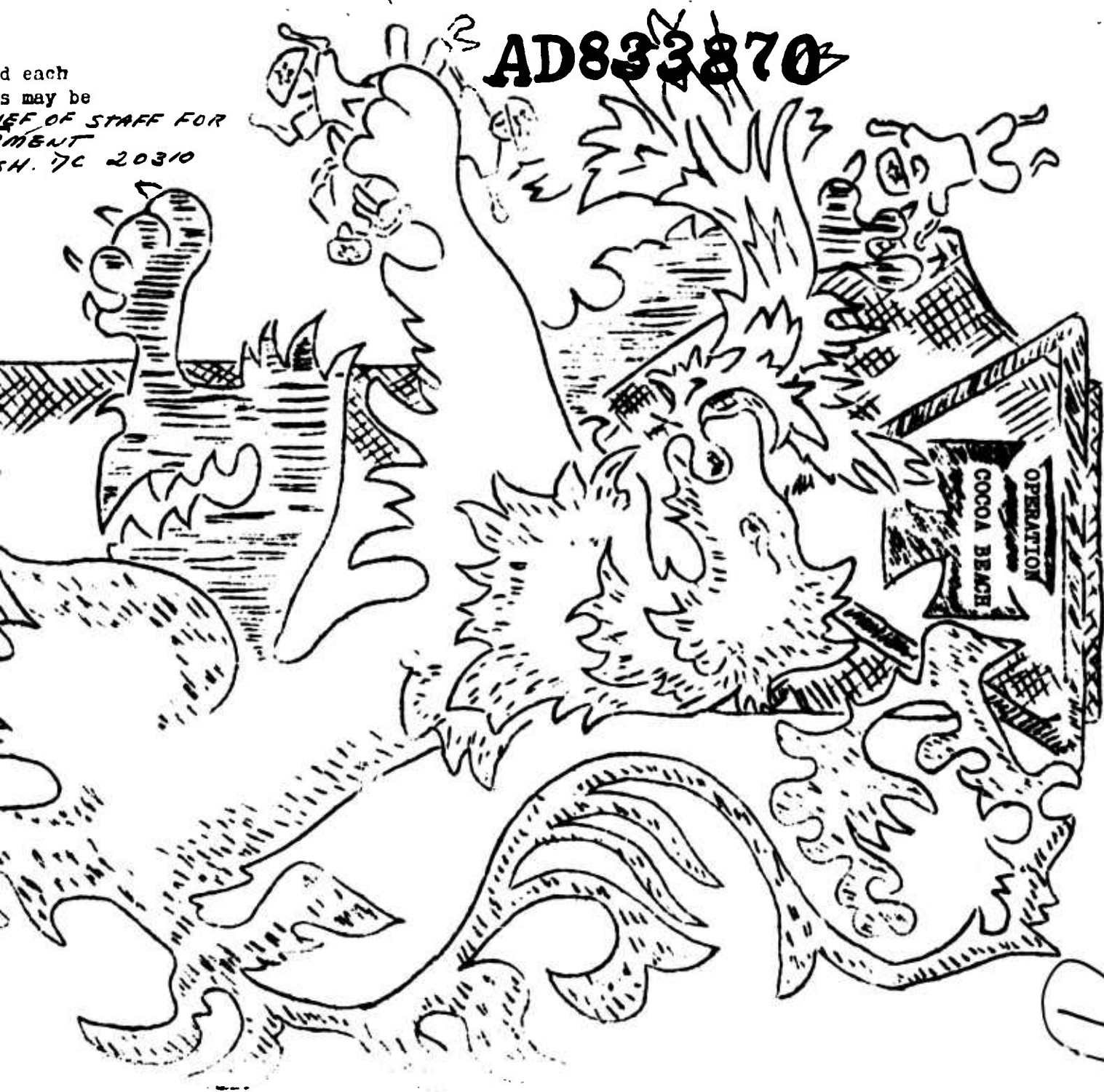
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COMBAT OPERATIONS AFTER ACTION REPORT

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B.

HEADQUARTERS 3D BRIGADE
1st Infantry Division
APO US Forces 96345

AVID-WB-C

3 April 1966

SUBJECT: Combat Operations After Action Report (MACV/RCS/J3/32)

THRU: ~~Commanding General~~
~~1st Infantry Division~~
ATTN: ~~G3~~
~~APO US Forces 96345~~ *Paul*

TO: Commander
US Military Assistance Command Vietnam
ATTN: J321
APO US Forces 96243

1. NAME AND TYPE OF OPERATION: Operation COCOA BEACH - Search and Destroy.

2. DATES OF OPERATION: 030700 March 1966 - 061600 March 1966.

3. LOCATION: BINH DUONG Province and BEN CAT District XT7948 - XT7940 - XT7040 - XT7048 (Overlay attached as Appendix 1).

4. COMMAND HEADQUARTERS: Headquarters 3d Brigade 1st Infantry Division.

5. UNIT COMMANDERS:

Colonel William D Brodbeck, CO 3d Brigade
Lt Col George M Shuffer, Jr, CO 2/2 Infantry
Lt Col William S Lober, Jr, CO 1/16 Infantry
Lt Col Kyle W Bowie, CO 2/28 Infantry
Lt Col Frank R Tims, CO 2/33 Artillery

6. TASK ORGANIZATION:

Headquarters 3d Brigade
2/2 Infantry
1/16 Infantry
2/28 Infantry
2/33 Artillery (DS)
B Btry 2/32 Artillery
D Btry 8/6 Artillery
D Company 1st Engr Bn

7. SUPPORTING FORCES:

a. Artillery:

(1) Size of Force: 3 six gun 105mm howitzer batteries and Headquarters Battery 2/33 Artillery; D Battery (3 inch howitzer SP) 8/6 Artillery; and B Battery (175mm howitzer SP) 2/32 Artillery.

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3 April 1966

SUBJECT: Combat Operations after Action Report (MAW/MS/13/20)

defensive concentrations fired in around the 2/28 Infantry perimeter. Extensive harassing and interdiction fires were employed around the 2/28 Infantry perimeter during the hours of darkness. On 4 March continuous fire support was provided to the 2/28 Infantry during their search and destroy operations. Check rounds were fired on the defensive concentrations around the 2/28 Infantry perimeter and H&I fires employed during the hours of darkness. On 5 March at 0600 hours the battalion FPC answered calls for fire from the artillery FO's with the 2/28 Infantry. At 0745 hours the aerial FO arrived over the battle area and, in conjunction with the ground FO's, continued to adjust artillery fire the remainder of the day. At 0900 hours D Btry 8/6 Artillery and B and C Batteries 2/33 Artillery fired preparation fires around LZ BLUE (XT735465) to be utilized by the 1/16 Infantry. On 060000 hours March all batteries fired preparatory fires on LZ RED (XT707439) to be utilized by the 2/2 Infantry. Continuous artillery support, on call, was provided as the infantry battalions policed the battle area.

(3) Results: Enemy losses attributed to artillery fire are 75 KIA by body count.

(4) Summary of Rounds Fired:

105mm	2230 rds	39 tons
8 inch	94 rds	9.5 tons
175mm	<u>10 rds</u>	<u>1.2 tons</u>
TOTAL:	2334 rds	50 tons

b. Army Aviation:

(1) All infantry battalion commanders were supplied with an OH-13 for command and control. The Brigade CP group operated from a UH-1D equipped with a command console.

(2) Resupply of the battalions in the field was accomplished by UH-1D helicopter.

(3) OH-13 helicopters from the 3d Brigade Aviation Section had provided day and night surveillance of the Brigade TAOR prior to the battle on 5 March and observed after the battle to determine the VC routes of withdrawal.

(4) UH 1D helicopters were utilized in the airborne assaults of the 1/16 Infantry and the 2/2 Infantry on 5 and 6 March respectively.

(5) Armed helicopters provided support during the operation and assisted in the preparation of the LZ's on 5 and 6 March 1966.

c. US Air Force: During Operation COCONA BEACH 73 close air support sorties were flown in support of the 3d Brigade Task Force. Within 30 minutes after the Brigade Headquarters was notified of the attack on the 2/28 Infantry perimeter on 5 March, an airstrike was directed against the attacking VC. Continuous close air support missions were flown in support of the 2/28 Infantry from 050715 March until 050915 March. At 050900 March an F-100 was shot down by ground fire while making a bombing run. The pilot ejected safely and was picked up by ground troops from the 2/2 Infantry within 20 minutes after ejecting. The plane was a total loss. At 050915 March 3 sorties were used to prepare the LZ for the assault landing of the 1/16 Infantry. On 6 March 1966 four sorties were used to prepare the LZ for the assault landing of the 2/2 Infantry. The Air Force is credited with killing 150 VC and destroying two 81mm mortars and four 50 cal machine guns. The close air support during Operation COCONA BEACH was outstanding.

5 March 1966
6 March 1966

66 sorties
7 sorties

TOTAL:

73 sorties

SUBJECT: Combat Operations After Action Report (MACV/RCS/J3/32)

8. INTELLIGENCE:

a. Estimate of VC Strength:

The VC units determined to have taken part in the battle of LO KE on 5 March were the 272 Regiment and the 441 Heavy Weapons Battalion which normally supports the 272 Regiment. Estimated strength of the 272 Regiment plus the 441 Battalion is 2000 men.

b. Intelligence Received Prior to 5 March 1966:

The last reported location of the 272 Regiment prior to 3 March 66 was received 28 February 1966 from Headquarters 1st Infantry Division (source: Headquarters, MACV). However, a report was received at 3d Brigade Headquarters on 042035 March from the Bde CAT Advisor that an unidentified regimental size unit was located vic XT790485. This is approximately 4 kilometers northeast of the location of the LO KE battle on 5 March. The source of this report was an agent. The 272 Regiment has previously been reported as follows:

<u>DATE</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>SOURCE</u>
16 Feb 66	XT6545	III Corps
19 Feb 66	XT7150	III Corps
20 Feb 66	XT7148	III Corps
28 Feb 66	XT7044	MACV

c. Situation Anticipated in Objective Area:

Reports indicated that a large scale VC operation was either in the planning, training and supply phase or was ready for execution in the northern portion of the Brigade TAOR. It was anticipated that a large VC force would attack friendly units when committed to an operation rather than attacking a base camp area.

d. Situation Encountered During the Operation:

The VC followed their established pattern of attacking a force much smaller than their own. As expected, they attacked a US Force in an operational area away from the base camp. After the battle and a pursuit was initiated the VC withdrew on all sides to scattered areas. They were routed into disorganized, small groups and took advantage of their knowledge of the jungle and terrain to effect a rapid retreat.

e. Terrain Features, Obstacles and Weather:

The battle was fought in the LO KE Rubber Plantation which is flat and devoid of underbrush except for scattered patches of tall grass and hedge-rows. The area to the west of the battle area was thick jungle. There were no major obstacles in the area. The weather, initially, was good. On 050800 Mar a low stratus began to form. By 050830 March a 1900 foot broken ceiling existed and remained until 051100 March at which time the cloud cover became scattered. Visibility below the ceiling was good except for smoke in the battle area.

f. Surveillance:

During and immediately following the battle on 5 March, all means available were utilized for surveillance of the enemy. Visual air and ground reconnaissance were employed during daylight hours. SLAR, RED HAZE, and the Starlight Scope were used at night. The R&W Team maintained constant vigilance to detect enemy radio and CW transmissions.

g. Psychological Warfare:

There were no psychological warfare operations conducted during the operation. The 3d Brigade does not have the capability for conducting tactical psychological warfare operations in a timely and effective manner. Again, an opportunity to immediately exploit a target of opportunity (ie, a major victory and the rout of an enemy force) was lost due to improper organization of person-

3 April 1966

SUBJECT: Combat Operations After Action Report (MACV/RCS/J3/32)

nel and equipment of the PsyWar team attached to the 3d Brigade. Reaction time to obtain either loudspeaker broadcast aircraft and/or an appropriate leaflet is too long to be of value. Hundreds of VC were fleeing the battle area seeking safe areas. They were susceptible to psychological appeals and directions on how to surrender. It is believed that many ralliers were lost due to inadequate Psy/Ops support. A recommendation as to organization of a tactical Psy/Ops team is being prepared and will be forwarded to higher headquarters for consideration.

9. MISSION: The missions originally given the 2/28 Infantry in their Operation Order 13-66 (Operation COCOA BEACH), dated 2 March 1966 were:

- (a) Destroy VC, their equipment and emplacements.
- (b) Disrupt VC activity.
- (c) Gain intelligence.
- (d) Interdict VC supply routes.

Upon commitment of the 1/16 Infantry and 2/2 Infantry on five and six March the mission of all units was to pursue, find the enemy and destroy him.

10. CONCEPT OF OPERATION: The overall Brigade concept of operation for March, of which COCOA BEACH was a part, was to conduct a series of battalion size operations within the 3d Brigade TAOR. The 2/28 Infantry was the first unit to initiate S&D operations in their portion of the Brigade TAOR from 3 to 8 March 1966. When the 2/28 Infantry had been out for 4 days, another infantry battalion would initiate a battalion S&D operation in their portion of the Brigade TAOR. After six days the 2/28 Infantry would return to base camp and the third infantry battalion would conduct S&D operations in their portion of the Brigade TAOR. All operations would be within 105mm howitzer range of LAI KHE. Therefore, one or two infantry battalions would be operating in the Brigade TAOR at all times.

This concept proved effective in that a major engagement with the VC occurred on 5 March 1966. After the battle of LO KE the Brigade concept was altered so as to commit forces in an attempt to find and destroy the fleeing enemy.

The 2/28 Infantry initiated the Brigade concept on 3 March with Operation COCOA BEACH. The 2/28 Infantry's concept for Operation COCOA BEACH was to move by foot into the area of operation and set up a battalion perimeter. Companies would then search and destroy from this battalion perimeter. The battalion would move every two days to a new area until the entire area of operation had been searched.

11. EXECUTION: A day by day description of the execution phase of Operation COCOA BEACH is included below. The major action of Operation COCOA BEACH was the battle of LO KE on 5 March. This action drastically altered the plans for Operation COCOA BEACH and changed it from a battalion S&D operation into a Brigade pursuit and destroy operation. (NOTE: A complete resume of the 2/28 Infantry account of the Battle of LO KE as published in 3d Brigade Battle Bulletin Number 8 is attached as Incl 1).

3 March 1966 - The 2/28 Infantry initiated Operation COCOA BEACH on 030700 March. The battalion moved by foot from LAI KHE to a battalion defensive position vic XT773445, where they dug in and resupplied by air. During the evening of 3-4 March the 2/28 Infantry placed out ambush patrols on likely enemy avenues of approaches around the battalion perimeter. There was no enemy contact on 3 March.

SUBJECT: Combat Operations After Action Report (MACV/RC/J3/32)

4 March 1966 - On 4 March A and B Companies 2/28 Infantry were dispatched to the west and north respectively. At 041140 March A Company 2/28 Infantry sprang a VC ambush at XT754459 resulting in the routing of the ambush force. C Company was sent to assist A Company. A Company then continued to XT753459 where they found a base camp that could accommodate 40 to 60 men and contained tunnels, foxholes, documents and 7 underground cooking stoves. The camp was destroyed and the documents evacuated. B Company had negative contact but did discover a large trench via XT780455 that ran for about a kilometer into BAU BANG (XT790458) and had been recently occupied by a large VC force. All companies returned to the battalion perimeter by 041645 March and resupply by air was accomplished. The battalion remained in the same perimeter as on 3 Mar and again dispatched ambush patrols around the perimeter.

5 March 1966 - On 050030 Mar an intelligence report received from the B&N CAT District Advisor was passed to the CO 2/28 Infantry. This report was that an unidentified VC regiment was located at XT790485 or about 4 kilometers northeast of the 2/28 Infantry. At 0600 hours the patrol from B Company 2/28 Infantry spotted a VC company via XT768461 and fired on it inflicting heavy casualties on the VC. The patrol then moved back to the 2/28 Infantry perimeter where they had to fight through another VC company that was preparing to attack. At about the same time, the patrol from A Company spotted VC all around them via XT773439 moving from east to west and this patrol fought its way back to the 2/28 Infantry perimeter. By 0630 hours all patrols had returned to the 2/28 Infantry perimeter and at 0635 hours the VC launched their first attack from the northwest. The Brigade Headquarters was notified of the attack at 0640 hours and an FAC was sent up and gun ships requested. The VC continued their attacks from all directions but heavy fire from the 2/28 Infantry, artillery fire and airstrikes stopped every attack resulting in heavy VC casualties. At 0745 hrs the 1/16 Infantry was alerted for commitment to assist the 2/28 Infantry. At 0800 hrs the 2/28 Infantry was running low on ammunition and a UH-1D helicopter successfully brought in some ammunition. The helicopter received heavy VC ground fire and crashed short of LAI KHE killing all 6 men aboard. At 0930 hrs the 1/16 Infantry made a helicopter assault landing via XT785465 in an attempt to cut off the escape routes of the VC to the north and east. The 1/16 Infantry moved to the west running into small groups of VC attempting to flee the battlefield. At 1200 hrs the fighting around the 2/28 Infantry perimeter had subsided so that a patrol from A Company 2/28 Infantry moved to the south in an attempt to make contact with the VC. This patrol came across a VC company digging in along the road via XT773439. The company was oriented to the south so as to block any attempt to reinforce the 2/28 Infantry by land from LAI KHE. The patrol backed off and artillery fire was called in on top of this VC company. At 1430 hrs the 1/16 Infantry linked up with the 2/28 Infantry and the battle of LO KE was over. The VC had been completely beaten and routed leaving over 200 bodies around the 2/28 Infantry perimeter. The remainder of the 5th of March was spent in policing and searching the battlefield. The 1/16 Infantry and the 2/28 Infantry went into a perimeter for the night of 5-6 March in the area of the battlefield.

6 March 1966 - On the morning of 6 March the 1/16 Infantry and the 2/28 Infantry continued to police and search the area around the battlefield. Intelligence reports indicated that the probable escape route for the VC had been to the west and north. This information was received from several POW's who indicated that their rally point after the battle was in the vic of NHA MAT (XT6949). Based on what little information was available, the Brigade CO decided to commit the 2/2 Infantry to the west in an attempt to catch some escaping VC and to search and destroy toward the east in order to gain more intelligence on the VC whereabouts. The 2/2 Infantry made a helicopter assault landing via XT707439 at 060900 March 1966. The landing was unopposed and the 2/2 Infantry moved east to link up with the 1/16 Infantry who occupied a blocking position via XT769460. The 2/2 Infantry had negative contact except for snipers. The 2/2 Infantry did find several fresh graves and some bloody bandages that did indicate that a portion of the VC regiment had in fact withdrawn toward the northwest. The 2/28 Infantry, after sweeping the battlefield and the village of BAU BANG, returned to LAI KHE and Operation COCOA H&ACH was terminated on 061700 March 1966.

12. RESULTS:

a. Enemy Losses:

(1) Around the 2/28 Infantry perimeter at LO AE 199 VC bodies were found. Due to darkness, the areas further out from the perimeter were not searched until the following day. Air strikes and artillery hit groups of VC as far as 2 kilometers from the 2/28 Infantry perimeter. Eye witness reports from artillery FO's, FAC's and the Brigade CO in the air along with agent reports received after the battle indicate that at least 460 VC were killed during the battle.

(2) Captured Equipment:

<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>ITEM</u>
4	50 cal MG
1	60mm mortar base plate
1	Mount, 57mm RR
1	Medical kit (large)
1	AT weapon
2	Submachine guns
9	Automatic rifles
13	Rifles
850	Rounds 50 cal ammunition
3	Rounds 57mm RR ammunition
8	Rounds AT ammunition
32	Rounds 60mm mortar ammunition
2500	Rounds 30 cal ammunition
30	Hand grenades
	Thousands of feet of electrical wire and Miscellaneous web equipment and clothing

(3) Destroyed Equipment:

150	Hand grenades	1	57mm RR
2	81mm mortars	4	50 cal MG
3	60mm mortars	1	Bicycle

b. Friendly Losses:

<u>DATE</u>	<u>KIA</u>	<u>MIA</u>
3 March 1966	6	0
4 March 1966	3	4
5 March 1966	10	25
6 March 1966	0	0

13. ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS: Initially the battalion 54, 2/28 Inf planned and coordinated the resupply by air of the 2/28 Inf. During the course of the battle of LO AE on 5 March it became apparent that the Brigade needed a parachute resupply capability. Two hours after the battle started, emergency resupply of ammunition was requested. The 54, 2/28 Inf, landed a UH1D and proceeded to the battle area. The ammunition was delivered but at a cost of 6 men killed and 1 UH1D destroyed. The battalions out of necessity go on operations lightly loaded, which places the burden on the Brigade to insure that they can be resupplied with the items they need and in the quantities requested. Experience has shown that all four major contacts with the enemy by units of the 3d Brigade have resulted in the necessity of resupplying during the battle. A parachute delivery capability should be readily available to the Brigade.

14. CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED:

a. Conclusions:

(1) FCL's must be established for coordination of artillery/air Force support so that continuous support is provided and neither an must "stand-down."

(2) All intelligence data surrounding an area of operation must be made available to the commander.

(3) The Brigade must have the capability to resupply a unit by parachute as during an engagement, resupply by helicopter may be impossible or may result in costly loss of aircraft and lives.

(4) All means of gathering intelligence in order to determine the route or routes of withdrawal of the enemy must be utilized in order that an effective pursuit can be immediately initiated and the enemy destroyed.

(5) It is extremely important that units dig in well and have an extensive security plan to include patrols and LP's in order to prevent a surprise attack.

(6) Reaction forces must be committed when sufficient information is available to determine the VC main attack and his most probable route of withdrawal in order to cut him off and destroy him. Once the reaction force is committed it must push the attack aggressively and remain flexible so as to react to any enemy actions. The pursuit must be initiated as soon as it is apparent that the enemy is withdrawing.

b. Recommendations:

(1) That a Psy/Ops team with the capability to give immediate leaflet and loudspeaker support be available in the Brigade.

(2) That a parachute delivery capability be available for immediate use by the Brigade if the necessity arises.

15. COMMANDER'S ANALYSIS:

Operation COCOA BEACH reinforced the belief that small battalion S&D operations in the Brigade TAOH are more likely to produce contact with a large VC unit than the large Brigade and Division size operations. The outstanding conduct of the defense by the 2/28 Infantry, the speedy and aggressive reaction by the 1/16 Infantry and the outstanding artillery and close air support combined to make this operation a complete success.

Once it had been determined that the 2/28 Infantry was under an attack by a large VC regiment, the original plans for Operation COCOA BEACH were no longer applicable and the operation changed from a S&D operation to a pursuit and destroy mission. The enemy had been located. The heaviest and most persistent attacks on the 2/28 Infantry perimeter in the early hours of the battle were coming from the northeast. Thus, the decision was made to airlift the 1/16 Infantry to the northeast of the battle area in an attempt to cut off VC escape routes to the north and east and to place the main VC force between the 2/28 Infantry and the 1/16 Infantry in order to destroy it. The results proved this to be a sound decision as the 1/16 Infantry did encounter many groups of fleeing enemy. Complete destruction of the enemy force was not accomplished as the VC units were broken down into numerous small groups that fled in all directions and eluded their pursuers.

On the morning of 6 March, after analysing all intelligence data available including reports of POW's captured in the battle, the decision was made to commit the 2/2 Infantry to the west of the battle area. It was believed that a large portion of the enemy force may have escaped to the west and north. Since it was known that the VC had suffered many casualties, it was hoped that the 2/2 Infantry's sweep from the west to the battle area might turn up more enemy dead and wounded and recover abandoned VC equipment. It was realized at this time that the landing of the 2/2 Infantry was too late to cut off any force which may have fled from the battle area on the 5th of March. The main purpose of landing the 2/2 Infantry on the 6th was to aid in searching and policing the battle area and in attempting to gain intelligence as to the probable location

AVID-WB-C

SUBJECT: Combat Operations After Action Report (MACV/RCS/J3/J2) ³ April 1966

of the defeated VC forces. The decision not to commit the 2/2 Infantry on the 5th of March proved to be a sound decision because no accurate information as to the route of the VC withdrawal was available on the 5th. The commitment of the Brigade's last maneuver element without adequate intelligence as to the location of the enemy force would not have been appropriate.

Operation GOOD BEACH confirmed that the VC are no match for a US unit when the VC elect to attack or to stand and fight in force. The tenacity and the aggressiveness of the US infantryman when backed up by the tremendous fire support available to him remains unbeatable.



WILLIAM D BRODBECK
Colonel, Infantry
Commanding

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as.

Copies Furnished:

MACV J2
MACT
Commander 2d Air Div
Commanding General 1st Inf Div

Inlosure 1 (Resume of Comments of the Commanding Officer of the 2d Battalion 28th Infantry on the Battle of LO KE on 5 March 1966) to 3d Brigade Battle Bulletin Number Eight (U)

1. Preparations Before the Battle. On 3 March, in accordance with 3d Brigade Operation BOSTON, the 2/28 Infantry initiated Operation COCOA BEACH. The mission of Operation COCOA BEACH was to:

- a. Search and destroy the enemy within the battalion TAOR.
- b. Develop intelligence.
- c. Confirm intelligence reports.
- d. Interdict enemy supply routes.

The 2/28 Infantry moved by foot to the north at 030800 Mar 66. No vehicles were taken. The battalion moved to a position vic XT770438 which was tentatively selected for the RON position but was unsuitable because of the tall grass. The S2, from the air, picked out another area vic XT775444 which proved to be suitable. The area was wide open and the rubber plantation to the south was devoid of brush and undergrowth. The battalion went into a tight perimeter defense and proceeded to dig in (see attached sketch). Picks and shovels were brought in by helicopter to aid digging. During the evening of 3 - 4 March three ambush patrols were placed out. The evening passed with no incidents or contact.

On 4 March one company was dispatched to the west to check out intelligence information that there was a VC base camp located vic XT758460. The company did find the base camp which was defended by about 10 VC. A small fire fight developed resulting in 1 friendly KIA and 2 WIA. Inside the base camp they found 4 or 5 small huts, warm rice and fish and several large underground cooking stoves. The camp appeared to be a way station along the main supply route. Also, on 4 March, one company was sent about 3 kms to the north to search and destroy. The company moved north and checked out the plantation buildings (sketch). They found nothing but on their return they found a huge trench (Trench #1 on sketch) that ran for about 2 kms from BAU BANG towards the west. The trench was about 9 feet deep and had holes dug into the sides for protection and for cooking food. The trench obviously had held a large force and was occupied as recently as two days earlier. This find disturbed the battalion CO very much. The battalion CO went to the Brigade headquarters and coordinated with the Air Force LNO and Arty LNO to insure that they knew of this trench and knew exactly where the 2/28 Inf perimeter was. The battalion CO then returned to the battalion perimeter and insured that all positions were deep and well constructed.

The 2/28 Inf made preparations to move the battalion to the west at 050900 hours March 1966. The CO, 2/28 Infantry, did not want to move too early in the morning as this is a very vulnerable time. The decision to move at 0900 hours would give the battalion ample time to complete resupply and sufficient daylight to prevent a VC surprise attack.

During the evening of 4 - 5 March three patrols were deployed after dark (see sketch). The battalion CO specified that each patrol would consist of at least 15 men and a radio. A four man LP was also dispatched to the edge of the jungle to the west.

At 050030 March 1966 the battalion CO received a radio call from the Brigade S2 sergeant notifying him that a report had just been received from the BEN CAT District Advisor that a VC regiment was located to the northeast of BAU BANG. This report disturbed the battalion CO very much, for if it were true it placed the VC regiment about 4 kms from the 2/28 Infantry perimeter. Having knowledge of the recently occupied trench to the northeast the battalion CO believed the report and personally alerted all the company commanders. At 050530 March the 2/28 Infantry conducted stand to.

2. The Battle. At about 050545 March Patrol B (sketch) with Lt Hibbs as patrol leader, heard noises to the east and notified the battalion.

At 0615 hours Lt Hibbs' patrol saw a group of civilians (mostly women and children) coming down Route RED (sketch) from the east. They were moving slowly. Some of the women were carrying weapons and almost all of the children were carrying ammunition. When they got to within 100 meters of the patrol they halted. Then from the north along Route BLUE (sketch) Lt Hibbs saw an estimated VC company double timing toward his position. (Note: It was still dark at this time but Lt Hibbs had a Starlight Scope on his weapon.) When the VC got to within 50 meters of the patrol they halted. The VC obviously had been running for a long time as they began to cough and spit when they halted. From behind this group of VC a baldheaded man in a white robe came forward with 2 or 3 other men, and they walked down Route BLUE and turned east on Route RED to join the civilians who were waiting. The bald man began to talk to the civilians. He seemed to be telling the civilians to follow him but they were a bit reluctant. The talking became quite loud. Meanwhile, Lt Hibbs had repositioned his 2 Claymore mines so as to fire down the road where the VC company was halted. He had also gone to each man in the patrol and given them instructions on what to do. Each man had carried about 8 hand grenades. Finally, the man in the white robe left the civilians and rejoined the VC company. He began leading them down Route RED toward the 2/28 perimeter. When the VC company was in the killing zone Lt Hibbs fired the two Claymores, killing numerous VC. The patrol then jumped up and started throwing hand grenades. Lt Hibbs jumped into the road and tried to kill the man in the white robe but he apparently missed him. By this time, the VC to the rear, who had not been hit by the Claymores, began to fire. Lt Hibbs instructed the patrol to return to the 2/28 perimeter and he covered them by throwing more grenades and firing his M16. Lt Hibbs then rejoined the patrol. The patrol members remember seeing numerous VC dead along the road and seeing a small boy running around in circles who had obviously been hit by the Claymore. Apparently, the head of the column of civilians had progressed down Route RED to the intersection with Route BLUE and several civilians had been caught in the Claymore firing area. (NOTE: On 7 March two badly wounded children got on a bus at B U BANG and were picked up by the MP's at the south check point. They had been hit by shrapnel and were probably in this group of civilians that Lt Hibbs had seen.)

In the 2/28 Infantry perimeter this action was heard and the battalion was completely alert.

Meanwhile, Lt Hibbs' patrol moved south along Route BLUE to rejoin the battalion. When they reached Position X (sketch) they ran into a VC unit (estimated at least 1 company) deploying to attack the 2/28 Infantry perimeter. They ran into the rear of the VC and caused some confusion. Then, a few of the VC fired on Lt Hibbs' patrol. The patrol, thinking they had run into B Company's lines, began yelling "Bravo, bravo, bravo." All around them they heard men with obvious Vietnamese accents saying "Bravo." But, they heard one voice in excellent American English say "Bravo over here." Lt Hibbs said "Like hell, those are VC" and the patrol fired on the VC with M16's and threw more hand grenades. The patrol fought through the VC and reached the 2/28 perimeter at about 0635 hours. When the patrol had just about closed, it was discovered that one man had been wounded in the elbow and was a bit dazed. A sergeant and Lt Hibbs went back to get the man. By this time, Lt Hibbs had been wounded in the leg. Also, the VC to the northwest had begun to place heavy fire on the 2/28 perimeter and had at least two 30 cal machineguns set up along Route BLUE. The sergeant picked up and brought back the wounded man but Lt Hibbs continued on to try and destroy the two machineguns. Lt Hibbs wasn't seen alive again. Lt Hibbs' patrol had accomplished many things and was the key to the complete success that followed. His actions:

- (a) Alerted the 2d Battalion 28 Infantry
- (b) Destroyed the better part of one company of VC

Inclosure 1 (Resume of LO KE) to Brigade Battle Bulletin Nr 8 (Continued)

(c) Disrupted an attacking unit and caused them to attack prematurely.

While this action was going on, at about 0615 hours, Patrol A spotted many VC moving from the east to the west. Before they knew it there were VC all around them. Since it was still dark, the patrol mingled with the VC and headed towards the 2/28 Infantry perimeter. When they got through most of the VC they fired on the VC around them and headed for the 2/28 Infantry perimeter. At about this time, the VC began firing 81mm mortars from vic of the plantation buildings. The mortar rounds missed the 2/28 Infantry and went about 300 meters to the south and landed in among the VC who were moving west. Patrol A reported they were certain that the VC mortars hit some of their own men and the confusion caused by the mortars aided the patrol in getting back safely. Patrol C had come back in at 0630 hours with no contact. The four man LP withdrew when they had heard VC movement to the west.

The first VC attack came at approximately 0635 hours from the northwest (sketch Arrow #1). This attack was triggered prematurely by Lt Hibbs' patrol. This attack was halted by the intense small arms fire from the 2/28 Infantry perimeter. At 0645 hours the VC attacked from the northeast (Arrow #2). At 0655 hours an attack came from the east. Brigade headquarters was notified at approximately 0640 hours and a FAC and helicopter fire team were requested. The FAC was airborne within minutes and a flight of fighters arrived and dumped their bombs on an attack from the west (Arrow #4) at 0715 hours. Considering the gun-target line and to insure that all support could be used the decision had been made to fire artillery to the south and west and use air to the north and east of the 2/28 Infantry perimeter. Airstrikes were conducted throughout the morning and these strikes in conjunction with the artillery support and stiff infantry defense pounded the enemy and broke every attack. The attack from the northwest shifted more to the north (Arrow #5) as the VC attempted to find cover in Trench #2.

At 0800 hours the firing died down. Therefore, an attempt was made to get a resupply of ammunition. The helicopter was told to make one high pass and see if it would draw any fire and, if not, to come in. Suddenly, a UH1D came over the tree tops and into the 2/28 Infantry perimeter from the east. The VC opened up on it with everything they had. The UH1D landed in the north west corner of the 2/28 Infantry perimeter and the load of ammunition was kicked off. The helicopter was receiving unusually heavy fire from small arms and machine guns including at least one 50 cal machinegun. The helicopter took off and headed toward LAI KHE. The battalion commander felt it wouldn't make it and notified Brigade headquarters to be on the lookout for a crippled helicopter. The helicopter did crash just short of LAI KHE. The attacks from every direction but from the northeast faltered and halted. The attack from the northeast continued throughout the morning but when the 1/16 Infantry landed behind the VC at approximately 0930 hours, the VC were routed.

At approximately 1200 hours the firing died down and A Company 2/28 Inf sent a patrol to the south. This patrol ran into an estimated VC company digging in and facing south at Trench #3 (sketch). It appeared as though this force was attempting to ambush a relief force if one had been sent from LAI KHE on the ground. The patrol fired on the VC but received a heavy volume of return fire and so withdrew. The artillery fired on this VC company using VT fuzes. At 1230 hours the attack against the 2/28 Infantry perimeter ceased. The closest the VC ever got to the perimeter of the 2/28 Infantry was about 40 meters. The 1/16 Infantry linked up with the 2/28 Infantry at 1430 hours, and the battle was over.

3. After the Battle. During the afternoon of 5 March the 2/28 Infantry and the 1/16 Infantry continued to search the area around the battlefield. Numerous bodies and a quantity of weapons and equipment were collected including four 50 cal machineguns. On 6 March the 2/28 Infantry continued to sweep the area and to search the Village of BAU BANG. The 2/2 Infantry was committed in the morning and the 2/28 Infantry returned to LAI KHE on the afternoon of 6 March 1966.

4. Factors Contributing to the Victory of LO KE from the Viewpoint of the 2d Battalion 20th Infantry.

a. The battalion traveled light and had no vehicles. This left the VC very few targets as everyone was in a hole. It was evident that the VC expected the battalion to have vehicles by the large number of anti-tank weapons that he carried but never used.

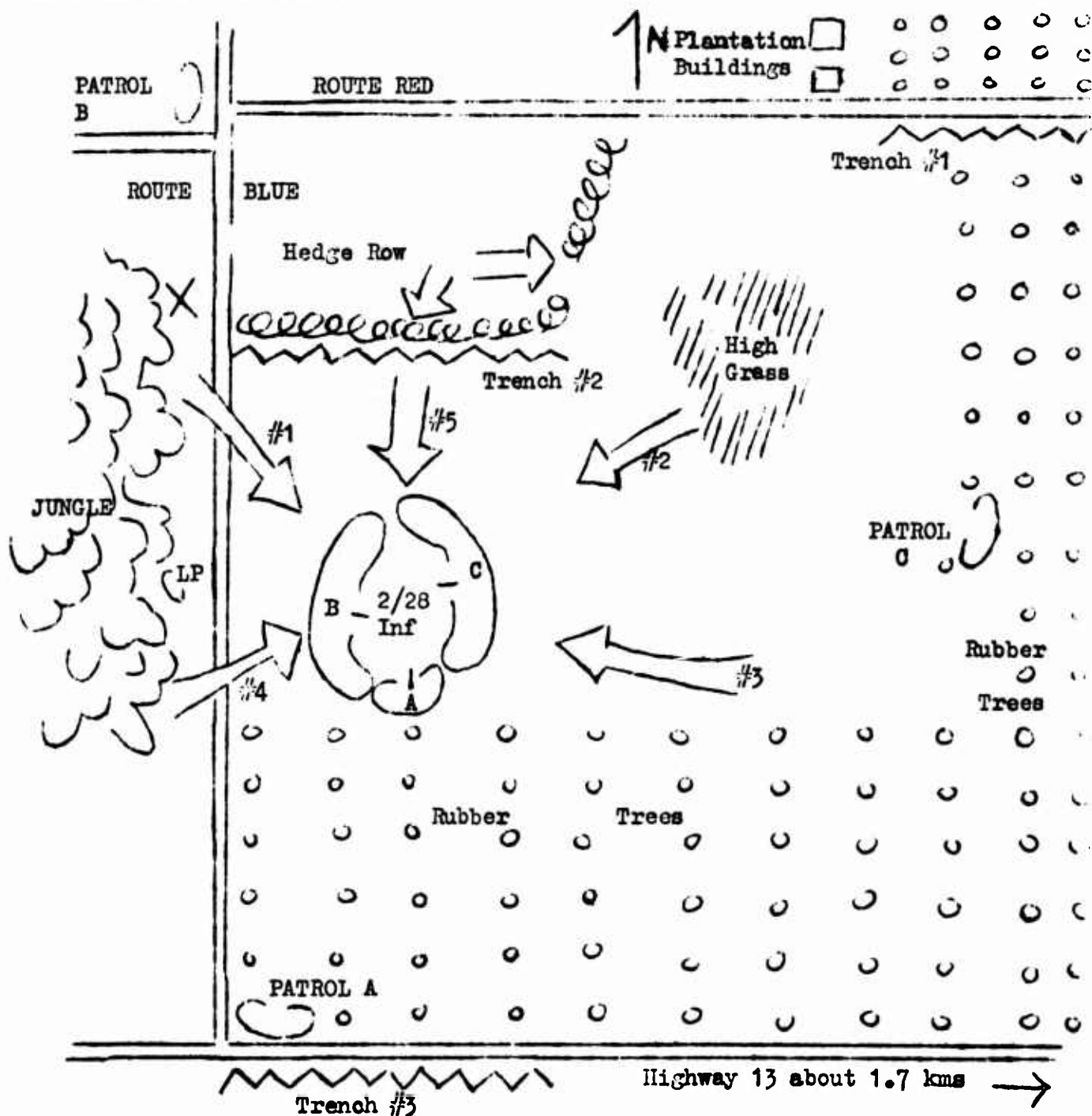
b. The commander picked a position that had good fields of fire.

c. It is imperative to dig in and dig in deeply. Every man must have a good fighting position.

d. Patrols must be placed on roads and intersections as the VC use roads and trails for movement at night and avoid the jungle.

e. Artillery and the air LNO's must know the exact location of the battalion positions and coordinate strike areas so that air and artillery can continuously operate without anyone's having to "stand down."

f. Intelligence data must be disseminated in a timely manner to achieve full benefit therefrom.



SKETCH OF THE BATTLE OF LO KE